

**Talbot County Economic Development Commission (EDC) Meeting**  
**Trappe Family Restaurant, Bambury Manor, 4014 Main St, Trappe, Maryland**  
**September 3, 2015 Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present:** Chair, Geoff Oxnam; Vice Chair, Haim Loran; Ted Bautz; Scott Beatty; Walter Chase; Peter Dunbar; Ron Engle; Paul Makosky; Gerald O'Mara; and Jacqueline Wilson;

**Ex Officio Members Present:** Jennifer Williams, Cassandra Vanhooser, Shannon Dill, Mike Henry, Terenda Thomas, Timothy Jones and Al Silverstein

**Attendees:** Scott Warner, Tonya Pritchett and Norm Fegel

**Members Excused:** Jean Weisman

**Walter Chase, Town of Trappe,** introduced Norm Fegel, President of Trappe Town Council who provided the welcome: Trappe Council reappointed Water Chase to the EDC as the representative for the Town of Trappe. Trappe Commissioner, Tonya Pritchett, also interested in economic development matters, attends the EDC meetings. Town of Trappe is interested in purchasing the Moore Building to support their functions and greater activity in town. There is no update from Lakeside Project, scheduled to introduce 1100 new residential units and commercial facilities over a 10-year phased development. The developers continue to negotiate for builders.

**Guest Speaker: Ted Bautz, Commercial Broker, Oxford Commercial, LLC and Representing the Business Community to the EDC,** introduced Bruce C. Armistead, Esquire; and Zack Smith, Esquire; from Armistead, Griswold, Lee & Rust, P.A. They are representing the principal, Richard Cohen, Capital Properties in the acquisition of the Inn at Perry Cabin by Belmond, located in St. Michaels; and the Harbourtowne Golf Resort, located adjacent to St. Michaels. The new ownership proposes major redevelopment of the facilities. To accomplish this project, legislation by the Talbot County Council will be required. A review of the project and the economic impact to Talbot County was provided. Mr. Cohen, who also owns the luxury resort hotel, Chatham Bars Inn on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, similar to the Inn at Perry Cabin <http://www.chathambarsinn.com>, purchased the Talbot County properties to expand the Perry Cabin Resort, increasing from about 70 acres to about 120 acres, with substantial improvements. In addition to the participation of the Talbot County Council, the project will require approval from the Critical Areas Commission, scheduled for October or November. The adoption of the zoning ordinances will bring the original project and the proposed plans for expansion into compliance. The county staff proposed enabling legislation Bill 1305 to the Planning and Zoning Commission in June of this year; however, the legislation met with opposition from area citizens groups and was not approved. The county staff is revising the legislation to support a flexible design process and a floating zone so that the project can be submitted to the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Council, that would permit and title the redevelopment of Harbourtowne. Mr. Smith is optimistic that the revised bill provides the mechanisms to move the application forward. He encourages recommendations of support for the legislation to the County Council on the merits of future projects that will affect tourism and economic development including additional private investment and job creation. With the Perry Cabin and Harbourtowne redevelopment investments there will be tremendous impact to the economy, employment opportunities for the trades, and additional staff requirements as an international destination. The project proposes renovation to the conference center, new units and the development of a Pete Dye golf course. Transfer fees for the two properties sold produced a significant amount of revenues to Talbot County Treasury. The county lost valuation last year, therefore it would benefit the county to look at smart projects and encourage redevelopment of other projects so we can bring the tax base back up. The Chamber Board is in support of the new legislation and moving the Harbourtowne project forward. Jennifer Williams, EDC's Liaison to County Council reported that new legislation should be completed soon, as the staff has been working diligently to get it done. A small group misrepresented the original bill and they put out a lot of false information. The intent was not to allow for anything, the intent was to open the door for people with great ideas and wonderful visions to have a platform. Ted Bautz, Chair of the Business Friendly Environment Committee, offered this matter as a case study, to examine how the county and local governments can respond to these kinds of projects in a more positive and supportive manner.

**Walter Chase introduced Melvin Schwaninger, owner of Pop's Market in Trappe:** as representing a family with deep roots in Talbot County because Mr. Chase used to work for his grandfather when he was a little boy. The Schwaninger family owns and operates Pop's Market, a 5-acre parcel on route 50 that offers Amish made furniture, sheds and outdoor structures and farm implement tools. Mr. Schwaninger reported that the family has been operating the business for over 36 years, which began as a produce stand. They were the first market in the area to specialize in quality Amish products, storage buildings, animal shelters & dog houses, gazebos, cabanas and sunrooms, lawn furniture & accessories, martin houses, birdhouses & feeders, and household furniture. Today, their son John has carved out an area of interest in selling, restoring and servicing farm equipment, used tractors, lawn equipment and implements to utility trailers of all sizes. This equipment is popular with those who own smaller farms and maintain hunting grounds, or are interested in vegetable gardens. The equipment is used to plough, mow, haul, cultivate and maintain smaller fields. Pop's Market is one of the most familiar landmarks along Route 50. We thanked them for their business in Talbot County.

**Call to Order:** Chair Oxnam called the meeting to order, with a quorum, at 8:33 a.m.

**Agenda and Minutes:** The EDC agenda for September 3, 2015 was approved unanimously. Mr. Loran offered edits to the August 06, 2015 EDC draft-meeting minutes which were read, then approved with a motion by Mr. Bautz. The August minutes was approved unanimously.

**Correspondence:** Notice was received from the County Manager's Office reappointing Gerald O'Mara for a 3-year term. Dr. Barbara Viniar extended an invitation to the EDC to host one of their meetings at the Health Professions & Athletic Center at the Wye Mills Campus and tour the facility at Chesapeake College. The director will put this matter on the October EDC Agenda.

**Old Business:** The director reported proposed Brownfield Legislation would be reintroduced to the County Council at the Quarterly Meeting for their consideration. A recommendation for Brownfield's certification and legislation to award Real Priority Tax credits was introduced in January 2015 and again in June 2015 but no action was taken.

Chair Oxnam reported the Communications Committee, established at the August EDC meeting, will arrange for a meeting and discuss goals for communicating with the public, as well as the County Council on the importance of economic development. Areas of interest are to identify communication priorities, review a variety of target audiences, some as small as the County Council, and craft a message of positive support of the activities of economic development. The committee will assist with a structure for disseminating relevant information to the community in a standard and approved format; and that the message of the value of economic development concerning the community's long-term health, will be crafted and delivered. The committee includes Mr. Jones, Ms. Vanhooser and Mr. O'Mara. Mr. Makosky and Mr. Chase also asked to be included. If anyone is interested in joining the Communications Committee, they may email Mr. Oxnam and/or Ms. Bethke.

**Business Environment Committee (BEC) Report:** Judith Shuler, who was the director of Talbot County Permits and Inspections, has resigned. Mr. Bautz is unsure as to how the department will transition. Frank Gunsallus, general manager at Konsyl, gave kudos to the Town of Easton for their inspection process in the 2-week / 24-hour a day renovation of their facilities. The work was completed on time and the Town was supportive in the permits and inspection process. Mr. Gunsallus indicated it was a very positive experience.

**Chair's Report:** No further report.

**Director's Report:** Talbot County unemployment rate for the month of July is 4.7%; fewer than 1,000 people unemployed. It is worth noting many jobs either have come back or have been created since the recession of 2008. The employment base is 19,340 and the labor force is 20,295, so we continue to import about 1000 jobs into Talbot County.

The housing market volume is up and prices are down. The average median sold price for July 2015 is \$232,500. June 2015 median sold price was \$252,450.

On Aug 11<sup>th</sup>, Wildlife International hosted their ribbon cutting to introduce the 28,000 SF renovation of the Environment Fate Laboratory; a \$6 million investment that will create an additional 75 jobs. Talbot County Council, the County Manager and the EAG Board from California attended. Also on August 11<sup>th</sup>, Tidewater Physical Therapy hosted a ribbon cutting for their solar field, the first of its kind in the Town of Easton.

The OED fielded interest from a blind ad for a large truck repair business interested in Easton. There was interest from national company regarding a facility in Easton to service large repair trucks. The OED continues efforts with the Federal Lab Consortium Project, which will be held on October 15<sup>th</sup> at Washington College in Chestertown. Please register to attend at <http://www.washcoll.edu/centers/ces/gis/flc-conference>. There are 9 Federal Labs discussing projects currently ongoing on the Eastern Shore that include a mapping, satellite, and sensor technologies; studying environmental conditions. Scott Beatty reported that Chesapeake Conservancy, a non-profit organization has an Innovation Center in Annapolis. They received a \$3 million grant from NOAA to map the Chesapeake Bay. The municipalities and counties will be able to use this data to map the actual source of pollution. <http://www.chesapeakeconservancy.org>. The OED received a team of SCORE representatives to discuss expanding their presence and assistance in the community. The last CORE Group meeting on August 12<sup>th</sup>, the county resource providers met with Allen Harim Foods to discuss their workforce development issues, as their turnover rate is high, and options for retention. In answer to a question regarding the status of the Medical Marijuana, Mr. Bautz reported that an on-site tour of the Black & Decker facility took place in mid August by Alternative Medicine Associates, LLC, which is the grower who is applying for the grower license. The application to be a grower must be submitted to the Maryland Medical Marijuana Commission who will select 15 applicants to award licenses. The AMA's plan is to demolish the Black and Decker building, utilize and refurbish. They will grow the medical marijuana indoors, and then it will be exported to John Hopkins and the University of Maryland. There was concern from an EDC member that this medical marijuana will not be sufficiently protected and it will become available on the streets of Easton.

#### **Town & Member Reports:**

**Peter Dunbar, Town of Oxford:** The commissioners of Oxford evaluated the price of the Mews building and submitted a counter offer to the owners but there was no response, and the ordinance has been withdrawn. The town is still active in looking at other options. The director reported the County Bids for the Oxford Park have been issued.

**Tim Jones, Chesapeake College:** No additional report

**Gerald O'Mara, Agriculture:** Thanked the County Council for reappointing him to the EDC and shared his involvement in supporting agriculture studies program at Chesapeake College and working with Lucy Hughes and Greg Farley. They will be guest speakers at the Farm Bureau meeting in October and at the Tidewater Farm Club in November.

**Mike Henry, Easton Airport:** Copies of the Aviation Administration's Economic Impact of Maryland's 36 Airports was provided and Easton Airport reported a total 483 jobs and \$42 million in business revenue. The FAA provided notice of a grant offer to Talbot County Council for \$589,000 to restart the environmental assessment. Mr. Henry will meet with Pete Rahn, Maryland's Secretary of Transportation, on September 9<sup>th</sup>. The Maryland Airport Managers' Association is concerned about future funding for the office of regional aviation assistance and MAA. Mr. Henry is meeting with Comptroller Peter Franchot on October 16<sup>th</sup>. Congressman Harris' office called to set up Aerospace Career Day Workshop on November 7<sup>th</sup>. Airport Day will be held Saturday, September 26<sup>th</sup> with a fleet of YAK's and many antique airplanes flying in for the event.

**Haim Loran, Vice Chair:** No additional report

**Scott Beatty, Business Community:** No additional report

**Al Silverstein, Chamber of Commerce:** The Regional Job Fair will be held November 2<sup>nd</sup>. There are 28 companies signed up.

**Tonya Pritchett, Town of Trappe:** No report

**Cassandra Vanhooser, Office of Tourism:** The Office of Tourism is preparing for early fall tourism and lodging is booked out to Tilghman Island. The summer was reported as a good season with positive room reservations and revenues. Holiday ads are placed to attract visitors to Talbot County for shopping and overnight visits. The towns have many events planned. The Office of Tourism is working with DNR and State Highways on a Water Trials Map for Tilghman Island and The Bay Hundred and there will be a ribbon cutting at Phillips Wharf Environmental Center today at 3:00 p.m.

**Ted Bautz, Commercial Real Estate:** No additional report.

**Walter Chase, Town of Trappe:** October 10<sup>th</sup> is the Annual Nace's Day Parade in Trappe and it begins at 1:00 p.m.

**Ron Engle, Town of Easton:** The Mayor indicated the CDBG \$1 million grant is expected to be released to begin water and sewer construction at the Talbot Commerce Park. The parking spaces in downtown Easton have been marked in an effort to deal with the perception that there is no available parking. Mr. Silverstein reported they are working on the West Street parking lot by taking out the meters and adjusting the lot to a 3-hour and long-term parking. This will allow employees in the Town of Easton low-cost and convenient parking. They are also considering removing the meters from the parking lot behind the District Court.

**Scott Warner, Mid Shore Regional Council:** Encouraged the commission to attend the Federal Lab Consortium on October 15<sup>th</sup>. The organization is phenomenal; there is a lot to learn about mapping and imagery and it is a growing industry. Mr. Warner mentioned the MSRC will be reviewing the CEDS document and it would be a good time to brief the EDC on the priorities for infrastructure development for the three county regions.

**Shannon Dill, UM AG & Natural Resources:** Invited everyone to the Farm Tour, Saturday September 19<sup>th</sup>, leaving from the Talbot County Ag Center and providing a morning tour of the Glebe Road Ditch Project and the Hutchinson Brothers Farm with a focus on technology research and applying it to the harvest rather than planting. The tour also includes a bioreactor, GreenSeeker®, a large manure structure, a pickling cucumber field and corn harvest. The Chesapeake Film Festival will be held in Easton on September 19<sup>th</sup> and the RMC Farmland movie will be shown. A short discussion regarding farming will follow.

**Chair Oxnam, Easton Utilities:** Junior Achievement taught financial literacy to over 1,000 students last year. The program is growing and they are working with Talbot Mentors, SCORE and others to discuss how to become more effective. The Eastern Shore Experiential Learning Project, an after school program with STEM and other technology for kids, is forming with a robotics program for kids in middle and high schools. With regard to Tidewater Physical Therapy, Easton Utilities played a supportive role in this project and they are interested in actively looking at distributed generation of solar and wind. Easton Utilities is building a facility that utilizes landfill gas and solar out by the landfill to provide more control with energy supply and cost. The director reported a meeting last week with a consulting group, Power Plant Research who is working with Peter Dunbar, on an application to map generation options for solar and wind. The state is becoming more proactive regarding where we can site these kinds of projects. Mr. Jones reported on Chesapeake College's experience and challenges with their solar energy. The College is working on curtailment technology, because of the saturation issue in the market with all these alternative energies. There is a plan in place now to put a 10-megawatt system up at Route 404/Route 50.

Upcoming commission meetings: **October 1 at Robert Morris Inn, Oxford; November 5 at Harbour Inn, St. Michaels; and December 3 TBD; January 7 at Talbot County Government Offices, 215 Bay Street, Easton; February 4 at Chesapeake College.**

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 a.m.